

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DJIBOU 00285 080809Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
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COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 0285

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PDIP, PINS, ET, SO, DJ

SUBJECT: FRENCH ESTIMATES ON OGADEN FIGHTING

1. SUMMARY: THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT THE SITUATION IN THE OGADEN
COULD RAPIDLY CHANGE IN FAVOR OF THE ETHIOPIAN CAUSE. THIS
REPORT FEATURES SOME OF THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS.

2. AS RESULT OF ITS TREATY OBLIGATION TO PROTECT DJIBOUTI
TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY, THE FRENCH MILITARY IN DJIBOUTI
FOLLOWS THE WAR IN NEIGHBORING FSGADEN/HARRARGEH REGION
CLOSELY. THEIR ESTIMATES APPEAR CONSIDERABLY DIVERGENT FROM
PRESS REPORTS AND OFFICIAL STATEMENTS EMANATING FROM ADDIS
AND PARTICULARLY MOGADISCIO. IN SHORT, THE LOCAL FRENCH
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PAGE 02 DJIBOU 00285 080809Z

AUTHORITIES IN DJIBOUTI BELIEVE THAT THE CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT
FOR A SUBSTANTIAL ETHIOPIAN VICTORY WHICH COULD INCLUDE A
DRIVE TO THE SEA IN THE DIRECTION OF BERBERA. ACCORDING TO
FRENCH AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL, THE REASONS FOR THIS ESTIMATE
ARE AS FOLLOWS.

3. BREAKDOWN IN SOMALI LOGISTICS. FRENCH INTELLIGENCE

INDICATES THAT UP TO 50 PERCENT OF SOMALI TANKS, TROOP CARRIERS AND ARTILLERY IN OGADEN ARE BROKEN DOWN FOR LACK OF SPARE PARTS AND MAINTENANCE. CURIOUSLY, THEY SEEM TO HAVE NO POL PROBLEMS. ACCORDING TO BOTH FRENCH AND SOMALI SOURCES, THERE ARE NO SOVIET OR CUBAN MILITARY AIDES ON THE SOMALI SIDE IN THE OGADEN FIGHTING

4. IMPROVEMENTS IN ETHIOPIAN PERSONNEL AND MATERIAL CAPABILITIES. ALTHOUGH PRESS REPORTS OF SOMALI VICTORIES IN VARIOUS SKIRMISHES IN THE OGADEN GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF ULTIMATE VICTORY FOR THE SOMALIS, THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT FACTS DEMONSTRATE THAT ETHIOPIANS HAVE FALLEN BACK TO PRE-DETERMINED MARSHALLING ZONE IN THE DIRE DAWA-DJIJIGA-HARAR TRIANGLE, WHERE THEY ARE NOW REASSEMBLING AND REARMING SOME OF THEIR MOST SEASONED COMBAT UNITS. ALLEGEDLY, SOME UNITS ARE NOW BEING REMOVED FROM THE ERITREA TO REINFORCE THE FORCES GROUPED AROUND DIRE DAWA. THE FRENCH HAVE HAD INTELLIGENCE OF RECENT ARRIVAL OF 40 U.S. PATTON TANKS ON EAST GERMAN FREIGHTER IN ASSAH. TANKS APPARENTLY FROM YUGOSLAVIA.

5. DISSENSION IN SOMALIS IRREGULAR RANKS. MANY OF THE ETHNIC ISSA ELEMENTS IN THE VARIOUS SOMALI UNITS OPERATING IN THE DIRE DAWA HAVE RECENTLY DESERTED TO JOIN WITH PURELY ISSA IRREDENTIST GROUPS WHICH EVIDENTLY HOPE EVENTUALLY TO HAVE AN INDEPENDENT ISSA HOMELAND. ACCORDING

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PAGE 03 DJIBOU 00285 080809Z

TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR, IN ONE UNIT OF 2000 OGADEN LIBERATION FRONT SOLDIERS, 800 DESERTED TO JOIN ISSA IRREGULARS. EMBASSY DJIBOUTI HAS RECENTLY HEARD OF REPUTED ISSA GOVERNMENT IN EXILE WHICH APPARENTLY PICTURES INDEPENDENT ISSA STATE CONTAINING POSITIONS OF THE OGADEN, ETHIOPIA (DIRE DAWA AREA EAST) WITH DJIBOUTI AS CAPITAL.

6. FRENCH BELIEVE THAT SOMALIS FEEL OBLIGED TO FOLLOW UP JUNE 23 DEFEAT AT DIRE ASWA (OVER 1000 LIBERATION FRONT TROOPS LOST) WITH ADDITIONAL ATTACK. IN THE EVENT OF SUCH ATTACK, ETHIOPIAN TACTIC IS TO RECOIL UNTIL MAXIMUM SOMALI TROOPS DRAWN INTO DIRE DAWA-DJIJIGA-HARAR ZONE AND THEN TO SNAP THE TRAP SHUT, HOPING TO PUSH COUNTER-OFFENSIVE TO SEA. SOMALIS ARE EVIDENTLY HOLDING ONE ARMORED BATTALION BACK IN SOMALIA NEAR HARGEISA IN ORDER TO HAVE RESERVES IN EVENT ETHIOPIAN BREAKTHROUGH. FRENCH DO NOT THINK THAT THIS PROVIDES SUFFICIENT STOPPING POWER TO HALT EXPECTED ETHIOPIAN THRUST.

7. THE FRENCH PROVIDE DAILY MILITARY SITREPS TO PRESIDENT GOULED AND HAVE ADVISED HIM NOT TO GO TOO FAR OUT ON THE LIMB IN FAVOR SOMALIS. LOCAL POPULATION IN DJIBOUTI, OF

COURSE IS ELATED AT WHAT SEEMS ULTIMATE SOMALI VICTORY IN
THE OGADEN.

COMMENT: IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT AN ETHIOPIAN PUSH TO THE SEAN
WOULD LEAD TO PANIC IN DJIBOUTI. WE SEEM TO BE ON THE EDGE
OF A HURRICANE IN DJIBOUTI. LET US HOPE FOR NO SUDDEN WIND
CHANGES.

CLARKE

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